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C.I.A. Says It Has Restored Link To Campuses to Get More Advice

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 — Twenty years after the Central Intelligence Agency was all but banished from American campuses, the C.I.A. says it has re-established its ties and is receiving research and advice from a growing number of university professors.

Robert Gates, the Deputy Director of Intelligence, said the agency had sought to accelerate a trend, begun under President Carter, of soliciting help from "the best minds in the country."

But the C.I.A.'s dealings with professors have been challenged by critics in Congress and within the universities as a threat to the independence of academic research.

Memory of the Shah

The new emphasis on seeking outside viewpoints was prompted, in part, by a review of past intelligence failures, Mr. Gates said. Some of these, such as mistaken predictions in the 1970's about the future of the Shah of Iran, could be traced, he said, to the development of a "U.S. Government perspective."

"There were scholars out there saying the Shah was in trouble, and somehow that never got incorporated into any official assessment," Mr. Gates said in an interview.

"What we are after is people who will challenge us constructively, offer us a different perspective, who will stir up the pot a bit and who will help us consider all points of view, particularly the unorthodox," he said. "Large bureaucracies like this one have difficulty promoting imagination and creativity."

"Can you imagine," he continued, "what people would say if we contended that no one in the academic world has anything to offer us, that there is no information or perspective that could help us do our job? It's inconceivable that anyone would make that point."

Mr. Gates said that approximately a fourth of the agency's intelligence estimates are now reviewed in draft form by professors or other outside experts, including retired military people. Previously only a "minuscule" amount of the agency's research was reviewed in this fashion, he said.

Since 1982, the C.I.A. has been the host of 75 conferences a year in which its analysts met professors and experts outside the Government, Mr. Gates said. Only three to four such meetings were held annually in past years. In addition, agency analysts are attending more academic conferences on subjects of interest to the C.I.A.

The questions over the proper relationship between the C.I.A. and academics came into sharp focus at Harvard University late last year in a dispute over the dealings between the agency and Nadav Safran, the head of Harvard University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

A. Michael Spence, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences, concluded in a report this month that Mr. Safran had violated Harvard's rules when he failed to disclose that the C.I.A. had contributed $45,000 to a conference on Islamic fundamentalism held at the university last year.

C.I.A. Money for Book

Mr. Safran also received a $107,000 grant from the agency to support research on his latest book. Mr. Spence blamed the university for failing to challenge the arrangement after Mr. Safran gave Harvard officials a copy of the C.I.A. contract. The contract gave the agency the right to review the manuscript and stop it from being published and prohibited Mr. Safran from disclosing the source of his funds. Both conditions violate Harvard's rules.

Mr. Safran is to resign his post as head of the center at the end of this academic year but remain a tenured professor at Harvard. He has said he views the C.I.A. as no different from any other source of funds.

Representative Don Edwards, Democrat of California, chairman of the Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, said the agency should publicly disclose all contracts with professors.

Mr. Edwards contended the agency's support for Mr. Safran's research violated a 1976 C.I.A. promise to Congress that it would not covertly sponsor publication of books in this country. "They're not supposed to operate within the United States," Mr. Edwards said, "and as far as I'm concerned, this is operating within the United States."

Mr. Gates said that the agency does not commission or underwrite books. He said academics doing research under C.I.A. contract sometimes ask permission to publish articles or books. In these cases, the agency will not allow its support to be acknowledged in the book.

Mr Gates said that disclosing what subjects the C.I.A. was researching could influence events abroad. "Let's say it was officially confirmed that the C.I.A. had authorized a study of the possibility of financial collapse in Lower Slobbovia," he said. "One could see how that would make international institutions lending to Lower Slobbovia very nervous."

Also, he said that the formal acknowledgment of C.I.A. participation would embroil an author in questions of whether the conclusions were his own or those dictated by the Government.

Until now, the C.I.A. has reserved the right to review before publication any work published by an academic who held a C.I.A. contract for research on the same subject. This, Mr. Gates said, was to make sure no classified information was inadvertently released.

Change of Policy

Under a new policy, he said, the agency now has the authority to waive this review if the work does not involve classified material.

"The business at Harvard is really an anomaly," Mr. Gates said. "There is generally a great deal of willingness to talk with us, share ideas with us. It stands out only because it is so rare, given the breadth of contacts we have in the academic community."

The C.I.A. advises professors to comply with the rules of their universities, some of which, including Harvard, require that senior officials be advised of any contracts involving the intelligence agency.

Mr. Gates heads one of the C.I.A.'s four directorates. He is responsible for preparing all of its written work for distribution throughout the Government. The analysts he supervises study a wide variety of material, including unclassified studies, information gathered by covert agents, intercepted communications and sateilite photography.

Variety of Contacts

Mr. Gates said the C.I.A. had several types of dealings with professors. Most common, he said, were the conferences, sponsored by the agency or outside groups, in which academics and agency analysts discuss various international issues. These do not involve classified information, Mr. Gates said. Academic experts are also called upon to review the agency's findings.

More rarely, he said, the agency contracts for research papers on particular topics. Finally, a handful of professors take leaves and are hired for yearlong positions as scholars in residence at the C.I.A. The number of professors now under contract is relatively small when compared to the "many hundreds" of academics who attend agency conferences and serve as paid or unpaid consultants, Mr. Gates said.

The C.I.A.'s early history in the 1950's was replete with senior scholars who took leaves to hold posts with the agency or worked as consultants. But Mr. Gates said that in 1960's, the agency and other arms of the American Government became "persona non grata" on the nation's campuses.

At that time, while many campuses were shaken by anti-Government protests, it was disclosed that the C.I.A. had covertly funded and manipulated the National Student Association and secretly used academics to write books and other materials to be used for propaganda purposes abroad.

Under Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence under President Carter, the agency began to rebuild its ties to academic experts, and Mr. Gates said the Reagan Administration had sought to broaden the relationship.

The C.I.A., he said, favors further increases in the agency's use of professors and other outside experts to conduct basic, unclassified research.

"We are working on an awful lot of issues we weren't working on 10 years ago," Mr. Gates said. "If present trends continue, without some help, we're going have trouble keeping up."

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